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Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
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MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLADS

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SUBJECT: A COMMUNIST "LIBERAL" SPEAKS OUT

REF: PARIS 12126

SUMMARY: THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCF) IS SUF-
FERING "NOT FROM TOO MUCH OF THE 22ND PARTY CONGRESS
LINE, BUT FROM NOT ENOUGH," SAYS NOTED COMMUNIST

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HISTORIAN JEAN ELLEINSTEIN IN A SERIES OF TH REE ARTICLES IN LE MONDE. PRESSING FURTHER AHEAD THAN ANY OTHER CRITIC TO DATE IN THE FIGHT FOR LIBERALIZ-ING AND DESTALINIZING THE PCF, ELLEINSTEIN CHALLENGES NOT ONLY PARTY ELECTORAL STRATEGY BUT ALSO ITS LONGER-TERM FAILURE TO ADAPT TO THE EVOLUTION OF FRENCH SOCIETY. AS A LEADING SPOKESMAN FOR THE PCF "LIBERAL" SCHOOL OF THOUGHT, ELLEINSTEIN FAVORS A NEW AND AS YET UNDEFINED BRAND OF SOCIALISM, "LYING SOMEWHERE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND THE COMMUNIST ORIENTATION OF TOURS (1920) AND THE COMINTERN". HE ACCUSES THE PCF OF ALWAYS STOPPING EVOLUTIONARY TRENDS IN MID-STREAM, SO THAT THE PARTY SUFFERS FROM AN IDENTITY CRISIS, THE OLD PCF HAVING DISAPPEARED AND THE MODERN ONE NOT YET DEVELOPED. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A SERIES OF THREE ARTICLES WHICH HE FIRST TRIED TO PUBLISH IN HUMANITE, COMMUNIST HISTORIAN AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR MARXIST RESEARCH JEAN ELLEINSTEIN PUSHES THE CASE FOR PARTY LIBERALIZATION TO THE MOST EXTREME POINT YET EN-COUNTERED IN THE CURRENT PROTEST MOVEMENT. WHILE SOME OBSERVERS ARGUE THAT ELLEINSTEIN IS A STALKING HORSE FOR MARCHAIS AND OTHER "LIBERALS" IN THE POLITBURO, EMBOFF WAS TOLD PRIVATELY BY BEST-PLACED
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LE MONDE CONTACT THAT MARCHAIS PERSONALLY TOLD ELLEINSTEIN NOT TO PUBLISH THESE ARTICLES. ELLEIN-STEIN ATTACKS NOT ONLY THE PCF'S CURRENT ELECTORAL STRATEGY, BUT DIRECTLY QUESTIONS THE STALINIST HERITAGE WHICH PRODUCED MOST OF THE CURRENT LEADER-SHIP, INCLUDING MARCHAIS.

2. "THE FEVER ISN'T BROKEN BY BREAKING THE THER-MOMETER": FOR ELLEINSTEIN, MARCH 1978 SIMPLY WAS NOT A SUCCESS: 86 DEPUTIES IN LIEU OF 74 CANNOT HIDE THE FACT THAT THE PARTY LOST GROUND IN THE POPULAR VOTE AND WAS SURPASSED BY THE SOCIALISTS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OVER 20 YEARS. COMPARING THE PCF UNFAVORABLY WITH THE PCI, HE OBSERVES THAT FRENCH COMMUNISM IN 1978 WAS UNABLE TO EXPAND ITS POLITICAL AND SOCIAL APPEAL, EVEN WITH THE COMMON PROGRAM, THE 18-YEAR-OLD VOTES, 630,000 PARTY MEMBERS, ETC.

3. USSR AS "ANTI-MODEL": THE PCF'S MAJOR PROBLEM HAS BEEN A RELUCTANCE TO CHANGE AND A REFUSAL TO ADAPT TO THE NEW PROBLEMS OF FRENCH SOCIETY POSED

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BY THE EVOLUTION OF THE PAST 25 YEARS. FOR EXAMPLE, PCF ANALYSIS OF THE REALITIES OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM HAS BEEN FAR FROM SATISFACTORY, AS IN THE FOREIGN POLICY FIELD WHERE SOVIET ACTIONS (AS IN AFRICA) ARE RARELY QUESTIONED. THE USSR IN GENERAL SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AN "ANTI-MODEL" BECAUSE "BUREAUCRACY DOMINATES AND DEMOCRACY DOESN'T EXIST." ELLEINSTEIN GOES SO FAR AS TO SUGGEST THAT EVEN THE TITLE OF "COMMUNIST PARTY" IS A LARGE HANDICAP IN THE EYES

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OF FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION. RATHER THAN PROPOSING A COMPLETELY NEW MODEL FOR THE FRENCH CONTEXT, HE SAYS IT MUST SIMPLY BE A "NEW WAY WHICH IS NOT TRADITIONAL
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SOCIAL DEMOCRACY NOR THE COMMUNIST ORIENTATION OF TOURS AND THE COMINTERN."

4. ELECTORAL FAILURE: IN CHALLENGING THE DECISIONS OF PARTY LEADERSHIP CONCERNING THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN, ELLEINSTEIN IS ESPECIALLY CRITICAL ON THREE POINTS:

-- THE RETURN SINCE SEPTEMBER 1977 TO THE OLD "CLASS AGAINST CLASS" THEMES AT THE EXPENSE OF THE MORE GENERAL APPEAL OF THE 22ND CONGRESS LINE EMBODIED IN THE UNION OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE. MARCHAIS HIMSELF IS ACCUSED OF USING THE TIME-WORN BATTLE CRY OF "MAKE THE RICH PAY" WITHOUT SUFFICIENT NUANCE, FAILING TO RECOGNIZE THAT WHILE THE WORKING CLASS MAY STILL BE EXPLOITED, IT NOW ENJOYS SUBSTANTIAL SOCIAL BENEFITS, OWNS SECONDARY HOMES, IS MORE EDUCATED AND HENCE MORE QUALITATIVELY ORIENTED, ETC.;

-- IN FAILING TO OPEN THE PARTY TO A GREATER DEGREE, THE PCF DID NOT CAPITALIZE ON MANY OTHER IMPORTANT SOCIAL FORCES, SUCH AS THE FEMINIST AND ECOLOGY MOVEMENTS, THOSE FIGHTING URBAN AND BUREAUCRATIC ILLS AND THE LIKE;

-- THE COMMUNISTS REVERTED TO A PRIMITIVE "ANTI-SOCIALISM" IN THE CAMPAIGN'S CLOSING MONTHS; ADMITTING THAT "UNION IS A COMBAT", THE PCF NONETHELESS TOOK "COMBAT" TOO LITERALLY. SAYS ELLEINSTEIN, "THE REAL
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HISTORIC COMPROMISE IN FRANCE IS VIA A TRUE RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS", INVOLVING DEBATE BUT ONE WHICH IS "SERENE, FRATERNAL AND REAL."

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5. RECTIFYING THE STALINIST PAST: ELLEINSTEIN ACCUSES THE PCF OF ALWAYS HALTING ITS EVOLUTIONARY TRENDS IN MID-STREAM, SO THAT THE PARTY NOW SUFFERS AN IDENTITY CRISIS -- THE OLD PCF IS GONE, BUT THE MODERN ONE HAS YET TO BE FORMED. HE CALLS ON THE PARTY TO RECTIFY THE INJUSTICES OF THE PAST IN ADMITTING THAT MARTY, TILLON AND GARAUDY WERE WRONGLY EXCLUDED AND TO RECOGNIZE PUBLICLY THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF STALINISM, E.G., AS REFLECTED IN PCF ACTIONS AT THE TIME OF THE GERMAN-SOVIET TREATY OF 1939. ELLEINSTEIN CONCLUDES BY ENUMERATING CERTAIN REFORMS WHICH WOULD PLACE THE PCF MORE FIRMLY ON THE 22ND CONGRESS ROAD:

-- REFORM OF DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM SO THAT DEBATE WILL BE "PERMANENT AND TRANSPARENT." DECISIONS SHOULD NOT BE ANNOUNCED TO A STARTLED MEMBERSHIP ON NATIONAL TELEVISION, BUT RATHER DEMOCRATICALLY DEBATED AT ALL ECHELONS -- THE "TELE-CENTRAL" SHOULD NOT REPLACE THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, AN INDIRECT REFERENCE TO MARCHAIS' TELEVISED ANNOUNCE-
. MENTS ON THE NUCLEAR FORCE AND ON THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT;

-- PROVISION FOR THE HORIZONTAL CIRCULATION OF IDEAS, NOW TOTALLY PROHIBITED BY THE PCF'S RIGI D VERTICAL COMMAND STRUCTURE;

-- ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE PARTY CONGRESS IN A TRULY DEMOCRATIC MANNER,

RATHER THAN CONTINUED RELIANCE ON SELECTION BY COMMISSIONS WHICH EFFECTIVELY FILTER OUT ANY OPPOSITION TO THE PCF HIERARCHY.

6. COMMENT: ELLEINSTEIN'S ARTICLES ARE THE MOST ELABORATE ARTICULATION TO DATE OF THE SO-CALLED "LIBERAL" SCHOOL IN THE PCF WHICH IS PUSHING FOR THE FULLEST POSSIBLE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 22ND CONGRESS LINE (A STRATEGY ACTUALLY INITIATED IN 1974 AT THE 21ST CO NGRESS), I.E., A MAXIMUM EFFORT TO

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DEMOCRATIZE THE PARTY AND TO BROADEN ITS APPEAL TO
OTHER SOCIAL CATEGORIES OUTSIDE THE WORKING CLASS.
COMMUNIST INTELLECTUALS ARE THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND
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THE MOVEMENT, ALTHOUGH THERE IS OBVIOUSLY SOME GRASS-
ROOTS SUPPORT WITHIN A PARTY MEMBERSHIP WHICH HAS
BEEN RECRUITED ON THE BASIS OF THE UNION OF THE

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LEFT STRATEGY OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS. WHILE ELLEINSTEIN MAY NOT BE WORKING DIRECTLY ON BEHALF OF ANY PARTICULAR PARTY LEADERS, THERE ARE NONETHELESS SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS FOR THOSE LIKE PAUL LAURENT WHO MIGHT LIKE TO MOVE IN THE SAME DIRECTION BUT WHOSE POSITION PREVENTS HIM FROM SPEAKING OUT AS DIRECTLY AS ELLEINSTEIN. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT LAURENT WILL BE THE PCF REPRESENTATIVE TO THE PCE CONGRESS THIS WEEK.

7. ELLEINSTEIN ALONE WILL NEVER CHANGE THE PCF, BUT HE IS AN ARTICULATE SPOKESMAN FOR THE NUMEROUS PARTY MEMBERS WHO SUPPORT THE EVOLUTION OF INTERNAL DEMOCRACY. THERE ARE ALREADY SIGNS THAT THE PARTY WILL MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF MORE OPEN DEBATE, FIRST THROUGH MORE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF THE APRIL 26-27 CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING (PUBLISHING OTHER SPEECHES IN ADDITION TO MARCHAIS' OFFICIAL PRESENTATION) AND LATER BY MODIFYING PARTY REGULATIONS TO PROVIDE REGULAR "OPEN TRIBUNES" IN THE PCF PRESS (NOW AVAILABLE ONLY FOR THE PREPARATION OF A CONGRESS). PCF LEADERSHIP COULD THUS HOPE TO DEFUSE THE CURRENT WAVE OF PROTEST WITHOUT FUNDAMENTALLY ALTERING ITS CONTROL OF PARTY MACHINERY. A GOOD DEAL OF PATIENCE WILL BE REQUIRED, PARTICULARLY FOR LEADERS WHOSE VERY LEGITIMACY IS BEING CHALLENGED AND WHOSE TACTICAL POLITICAL JUDGMENT IS BEING QUESTIONED. THE ODDS ARE, HOWEVER, THAT THE PCF WILL RIDE OUT THIS TEMPEST WITH ONLY VERY MODERATE REFORM AND THAT "LIBERALS" LIKE ELLEINSTEIN
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STILL HAVE A LONG ROW TO HOE.
HARTMAN

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Message Attributes

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Draft Date: 19 apr 1978
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Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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